

"THE CORNERSTONE AND THE STONES"

I. SOME OF THE THINGS ILLUSTRATED IN THIS METAPHOR OF THE CHURCH

A. This metaphor illustrates, first of all, the uniqueness of the Church as a structure.

1. Unlike any other building the church is figured herein as a living structure.

a. As far as the foundation is concerned it is not laid upon anything on this earth like other buildings but it is laid upon a person (I Cor.3:10-11).

b. The cornerstone of this structure is the primary stone, because it determines the design and overall symmetry. It is unlike anything in any earthly structure.

This Cornerstone which is the Chief One is absolutely flawless! and therefore more precious than any other (I Pet. 2:6). This one is also elect or the One chosen by God.

c. The building stones in this structure are also unique because they are unlike any other - they are believers who are figured here as "living stones" (I Pet.2:4,5)

2. Unlike any other building the Church is figured herein as being fitted together and growing with all of its various parts being made up of uniquely designed and gifted individuals who are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:14-22).

B. This metaphor illustrates secondly the placement and the process in the building of the Church as a

structure.

1. In this construction we notice firstly that each stone is built upon the foundation who is the Lord Jesus Christ (I Cor.3:11) and it is only as they come unto this Living Stone by faith that they become a part of this structure (I Pet. 2:4).
2. Secondly in this construction we see as these living stones which are believers are brought into a relationship with Christ they are at the same time "fitly framed together" and joined in a unique relationship with other believers (Eph.2:21; 4:16).
3. Notice next in this construction of the Church that it is in the process of growing. In this respect then we see that every time someone comes to Christ for salvation this structure is "being built up" (I Pet. 2:5; Eph. 2:21).

C. This metaphor illustrates thirdly the design and the purpose in the Church as a structure.

1. This structure of the Church which is made up of believers in the Lord Jesus is designed to be a "a holy temple in the Lord"(Eph. 2:21). In other words it is set apart or different from any other building. In this respect then we may view the Church not only as a body of believers but also as a building of believers (I Cor.3: 16-17).
2. The purpose then for this "holy temple" made up of believers is for the "habitation of God" or for Him to dwell there through the Spirit (Eph. 2:22). Just like the temple in the O.T.served as a place for God to commune with His people so now the Church is that place.

II. SOME OF THE THINGS INVOLVED IN THIS RELATIONSHIP AS BELIEVERS

A. This relationship involves assurance and rest for every believer. Just like every stone rests upon the foundation so every believer rests upon the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary.

B, This Relationship also speaks to us as to how we are fitted in this building which is the Church and how we should be joined to others.

1. The word for Stones (I Pet.2:5) is the word lithos which applies to one which is worked or shaped. And this is what the Lord does to each of us as He places us in His Holy Temple. He hews and shapes us to fit in the particular place He wants us.

2. In this construction then we See we are "framed together" or joined in relationship to others in the building. The word joint or harmos thon speaks to us of harmony in that relationship.

C. This relationship speaks to us of holiness in our individual lives as well as in the life of a church. Just what is involved can be seen a little in the two words for temple.

1. The word hieron is used of the whole temple and all of its outer parts. This is the word which is used of the temple in Luke 18:10 where the pharisee and the publican prayed.

2. But the other word for temple which is naos is used of the holy of holies where God dwelt and met with His people through the ministry of the High Priest and the atoning blood. It was this temple veil that was rent when Christ was crucified and it is this word for temple which is used of the church as the temple of God.

D. This relationship demands a sanctified life both for the individual believer as well as for the whole building of believers who make up the church (I Cor.6:19,20;3:16,17).

1. Notice that the word temple in I Cor.6:19 Is Individual and refers to the believer himself.

2. The word temple in I Cor.3:16,17 refers to the whole body of believers. What is said here is this. If a man defiles or literally corrupts a local church by leading it away from its holy purpose and purity in which it should abide, then God will destroy that man.

- E. This relationship points out to us the place and ministry that the Holy Spirit has in this world. God is dwelling in the hearts of believers and doing His work in and through them as they yield themselves to Him and are consecrated for His service.

III. SOME OF THE THINGS IMPLIED FOR US TO DO BASED UPON THIS RELATIONSHIP.

- A. We should first of all see that God has placed us in a unique place in the church structure and that He has framed us together with others so that we should abide in harmony.
- B. We should live holy lives to fulfill the purpose for which we were designed and thereby please the Lord.
- C. We should welcome the addition of believers in God's temple which is the Church and see it as a task yet uncompleted and one He has called us to be involved in.